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'Subject to control': shifting geographies of race and labour in US sugar agroindustry, 1930–1950

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This article analyses how processes of racialization and place making converged in south Florida as the region's sugar agroindustry shifted from a southern US to a Caribbean labour market. The article engages theoretically at the intersection of the literatures on the geographies of race and labour, paying particular attention to ideas about the role of the state in each. I argue that such an engagement not only enhances the collective analytical power of such approaches, but that it is also critical for understanding agroindustry labour practices in south Florida. The empirical materials used include historical documents, reports and publications of the US Government and the United States Sugar Corporation (USSC). The analysis shows how ideas of corporate paternalism and industrial managerialism promoted by USSC were melded to an agricultural enterprise embedded in the racism of the Jim Crow South and the history of plantation slavery. The contradictions between USSC's dependence on cheap labour disciplined by Jim Crow violence and its corporate paternalism would never be fully reconciled and ultimately would prove untenable. As a consequence, sugar industry investors in collaboration with state labour regulators reimagined the ideal cane worker, elaborating intraracial categories of black labour based on place of origin. As the geography of labour markets was rescaled to the international level, the primary mechanism of labour control shifted from Jim Crow to summary deportation of foreign black workers from the Caribbean. This study contributes to our understanding of how historic processes of racialization are bound together with the political and economic processes of regional agroindustrial development.

> There are probably from one to three thousand idle negro farm hands in the Glades and the Coastal areas of the three southernmost counties. The sugar company is making a desperate effort to secure labour to cut the cane which must be cut within thirty days. Probably eighteen thousand acres of sugar cane which went through the February 16 freeze will be useable if it is cut within thirty days.[1]

In the spring of 1942 sugar growers in south Florida faced a crisis, the gist of which is laid out in the above passage from a federal employment official's report. The 'sugar company' referred to was the United States Sugar Corporation (USSC), which at the time produced over 90 per cent of Florida's sugarcane crop. The company's plantation

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managers had grown accustomed during the Great Depression to recruiting an oversupply of seasonal labour, a strategy that both kept wages depressed and afforded a greater level of labour control. Their seasonal labour force for manual plantation tasks of planting, cutting and loading cane was exclusively black. The vast majority were sharecroppers and farm labourers from northern Florida and surrounding southern states. As the Second World War drew rural southern labour into military service and industrial production, agricultural wages were driven upward and labour surpluses were transformed into shortages. By 1942, USSC executives were complaining of 'a disappearance of a labour surplus in the Everglades' due to military enlistment and 'the lure of the big city and war-industry plant on all country-bred people'.[2] As the above passage's reference to 'idle negro farm hands' suggests, however, racial ideologies were as important to explanations of the labour crisis as were the economic rationalities of the marketplace.

In this article I examine how processes of racialization and place-making converged in USSC's effort to overcome its labour crisis by shifting from a southern US to a Caribbean labour market. I give particular attention to the complexities and contradictions of constructions of difference *within* broad racial categories such as 'black' and 'white', which I refer to as 'intraracial' categories and typologies. I show how the company managed, in collaboration with US federal agencies, to maintain and even increase its control over its labour force as well as keep wages suppressed by constructing a discourse of race and geography that essentialized intraracial identities based on national origin, urban versus rural residence and domestic versus foreign-born. The analysis links racial ideologies, regional labour markets and meanings of place with the economic logic of Florida agroindustrial investment in the 1930s and 1940s. Northern industrialists and financiers invested in Florida sugarcane production, bringing with them practices and philosophies of labour relations and labour control honed on the shop floors of General Motors (GM). While south Florida was not part of the historical US southern plantation experience, it was embedded in the culture of the Jim Crow South. Thus northern corporate culture was layered over an existing regional culture with roots in an agrarian, slave-based economy. In particular, I argue that the southern-based paternalist ideologies that romanticized antebellum race relations and helped justify Jim Crow were overlaid by an imported northern industrial corporate paternalism, which produced glaring contradictions with actual labour conditions. Furthermore, in focusing on this layering of northern corporate and southern plantation paternalism at the site of Florida's sugar agroindustry, the analysis complicates the idea of the US South as an 'othered' region set apart from the modern industrial mainstream of the rest of the nation. Indeed, the profitability of northern industrialists' investments hinged on maintaining and utilizing the racist institutions of the South.

I argue that race and labour in the Florida sugar agroindustry must be understood through an analysis of relations between places. Such an analysis reveals the dynamism, instability and flexibility of racial identities in the context of interregional movements of labour and capital. Focusing on the labour crisis in Florida's sugar agroindustry provides a window through which to view how essential racial characteristics are attributed not only to large undifferentiated categories of black and white but also to

multiple intra-racial, geographically ordered categories. Furthermore, the case of south Florida also reveals how labour recruitment and control hinge on the construction of essential racial difference, and how the meanings of externally imposed racial identities reflect the labour needs of particular industries in particular times and places. The article engages theoretically at the intersection of the literatures on the geographies of race and labour. I argue that theoretical approaches to geographies of race can be enriched by giving attention to the interactions of labour markets and racialization, while labour geographies will benefit from a greater acknowledgment of the dynamism, heterogeneity and complexity of racial categories. I use the case of USSC to demonstrate the collective power of these combined approaches to provide an understanding of how racial identity, place and labour markets are relational and mutually constitutive.

The case under study in this article is the sugarcane region of Florida – centered in what is now known as the Everglades Agricultural Area south of Lake Okeechobee – from the period of the Great Depression through the Second World War (Figure 1). The empirical materials were obtained from contemporary government documents, reports

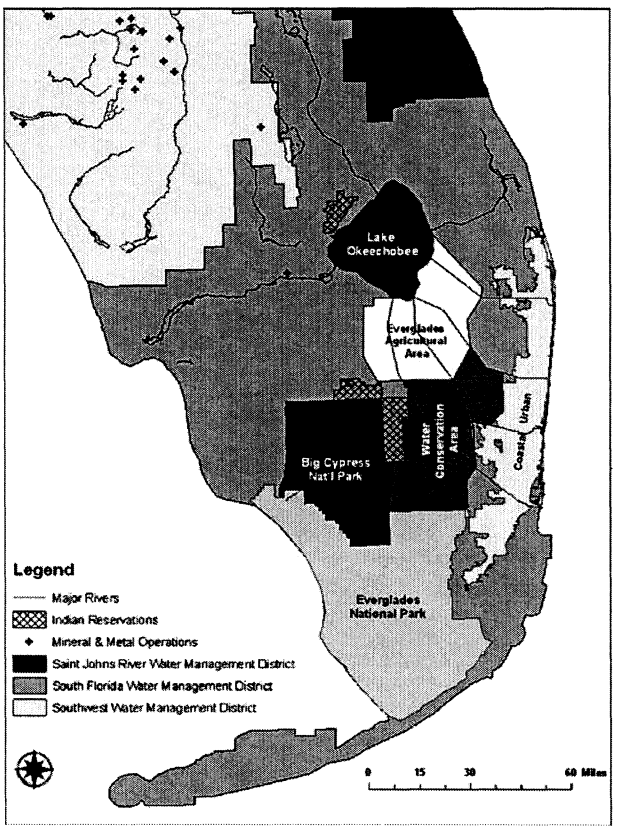

FIGURE 1 South Florida with the Everglades Agricultural Area and Everglades. (Map constructed by Dr. Jennifer Gebelein.)

and publications, and from secondary historical publications. Collections consulted include the US National Archives, US Library of Congress, sugar collection of the Clewiston (Florida) Public Library, Special Collections of the University of Florida Library, and files of Florida Rural Legal Services. Mostly primary source materials are used to analyse the specific case of USSC and the sugarcane region of Florida, while secondary sources provide the broader cultural and political economic context for race, place and labour in the US South. Before presenting the empirical foundation of my arguments, I begin by positioning the Florida case within the bodies of work on the geographies of race and labour.

Geographies of race and labour

In this study I bring the geography literatures of race and labour into conversation with one another in order to understand the centrality of racialization in structuring the labour market for Florida's sugar agroindustry. First, the study of race and racism in geography, which some would argue has undergone a 'renaissance' in recent years, [3] has been principally guided by a broadly social constructionist framework.[4] Central to this social constructionist approach is the concept of 'racialization', the process through which essential characteristics are ascribed to particular groups and through which places, regions and landscapes are racialized.[5] The process of racialization is variable in time and space and is best understood as embedded in the prevailing cultural norms and meanings and political-economic structures of particular places in particular historical moments. Thus the meaning of race and racial identities change as the social structures and discourses change over time and space.[6] Racialization is also irreducibly a political project, as 'state institutions organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life'.[7] The importance of this insight for understanding the mutual construction of place, race, and labour will be evident in the analysis of the state's involvement in the Florida sugar agroindustry.

In the years since Jackson and Penrose suggested that there had been 'relatively little work on the historical geographies of "race" and racism',[8] significant new studies have been conducted in this area. Of particular interest here are two recent studies of the construction of white identities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century South and their respective analytical interests in narrative and performance.[9] Winders examines textual themes, including ideas of whiteness, in northern writers' narratives of the Reconstruction South, while Hoelscher's study illustrates the role of public performances in the construction of white identity and race relations in Jim Crow Mississippi. While both studies achieve superbly on their own terms, there is little discussion in either of how the specific material conditions of the region, such as racial divisions of labour, racially differentiated wage scales, the suppression of unionization efforts and the deskilling of black labour, relate to the construction of racial identities. For example, paternalist ideology, which was critical in the construction of white identity and justifying white domination, was an important reaction to labour activism in the South.[10] In analysing the South's transition from cotton field to cotton mill,

Woodward argues, 'Mill-village paternalism was cut from the same pattern of poverty and makeshift necessity that served for plantation and crop lien paternalism.'[11]

What I hope to demonstrate here is that we can benefit from a greater effort to relate narratives, discourses, representations and performances of race to the changing material conditions of everyday life.[12] To that end, this article will explicitly tease out the connections between the construction of racial identities and race relations and the social organization of labour. Prominent approaches to labour geography have focused on the social regulation of labour markets and on the role of workers in shaping the geography of capitalism.[13] In these studies the agency of labour – sometimes in cooperation with, sometimes in opposition to capital – actively shapes the 'geographies of global capitalism' and 'quite literally makes places'.[14] Class identities tend to be the primary focus of analysis, often to the neglect of any recognition of the racial structure of labour markets. However, Mitchell, in his study of migrant agricultural labour and the California landscape, acknowledged that 'race, like gender, age, ethnicity, and sexuality, intersects in complex ways with class differentiation'.[15] The intersection of class and race can perhaps be seen most clearly in this and other studies of migrant agricultural labour in North America.[16] Growers in a variety of settings have developed, with a great deal of state support, a highly racialized labour supply as a strategy for controlling farm workers. Certain races and ethnic groups were constructed – typically in contrast with whites – as suitable or unsuitable for agricultural labour on the basic of imagined essential racial characteristics. While studies of agricultural labour have explored race and class intersections, they do not fully capture the dynamism, flexibility, heterogeneity and instability of racial categories. Racialization, it should be stressed, is an ongoing process that constructs particular meanings of race and racial identity in particular places and historical moments, while also producing shifts in these meanings over space and through time. These particularities and shifts have significant implications for the geography of labour markets.

In this study I emphasize the heterogeneity and flexibility of large racial groupings, giving attention to the complexities and contradictions of constructions of difference *within* categories such as black, white, Asian and so on. In the discourse of labour market segmentation, large racial categories are composed of multiple *intraracial essentializations* derived from associations with particular places and regions. For instance, in North America race and ethnicity have been merged in the process of constructing racial identity, creating a single category of 'black', while in the Caribbean, systems comprised of multiple categories of racial identity have been elaborated.[17] Individuals and groups may be 'raced' differently at different scales and in different regional contexts.[18] Processes of racialization produce dynamic, heterogeneous categories that are unstable both temporally and geographically. In short, 'racialization always has a specific geography [and history]',[19] which, in the case of Florida's sugarcane plantations, has important implications for the structure of labour markets and the geography of labour sourcing for agricultural production.

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, race and class were thoroughly imbricated in the agricultural labour market of the US South and linked symbolically and materially to the region's history of slavery. That is, the agricultural manual labour

force of the 1930s and 1940s was racialized in a particular way that is traceable to the region's history as a slave economy. While my purpose here is not to review the extensive literature debating 'the South' as a distinctive region, it is important to point out how the region has been 'othered' and set apart from the rest of the nation.[20] The South was constructed relationally with other regions and within established hierarchies of power as relations of production were 'stretched out' over the space of the US nation and beyond.[21] In materialist terms, a key function of the South in the first half of the twentieth century was as a cheap labour market for capital from the North. Tracing the process of racialization at various scales, I seek to demonstrate how constructions of racial characteristics intersected with questions of labour recruitment, labour control and capital accumulation in the agricultural sector. In particular, I wish to stress how 'the racialization process has been associated with particular symbolic geographies',[22] in this case that of the southern and Caribbean plantation. The key point here is that northern capital investment in Florida sugarcane production was not simply a function or outcome of economic forces. The decisions of northern investors and the responses of black agricultural workers were culturally embedded in the history of southern race relations and the symbolic meanings associated with the South and with plantation labour.[23] Thus we now turn to examine briefly the history and geography of race and labour relations in the US South, providing the necessary context for understanding the racialization in Florida's sugar agroindustry.

Race, place and labour in the New South

Southern Florida is located in the south-eastern United States, and yet not considered a part of the vernacular region labelled as 'the South'. During the antebellum period, northern Florida was culturally and economically linked to the South and plantations had been established there; southern Florida was oriented more toward the Caribbean, and remained economically undeveloped.[24] Southern Florida's geoclimatic conditions – specifically a longer growing season, a greater number of frost-free days, and extensive deposits of fertile 'muck' soils south of Lake Okeechobee – also set it apart from the rest of the South. Recognizing the peculiar status of southern Florida as *in* the South but not *of* the South is important for understanding the process of racialization of the agricultural labour market in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In the years leading up to the First World War, the New South, fuelled by the investments of northern industrialists, was emerging from the ashes of the Old South. During the same period, southern Florida was still widely viewed as a frontier region, a virtual tabula rasa that 'seemed empty and disconnected from the South's history of slavery and war'.[25] Southern Florida's economic development, driven by real estate speculation and agricultural investment, began to take hold only in the 1920s. While the South sought to rebuild its economic foundations, southern Florida was just breaking ground, as it were.

What does southern Florida's particular place identity mean for ideas of race and race relations in the region's economic development in the 1930s and 1940s? How does it

affect the racialization of labour markets? We first need to consider broadly the material and cultural construction of 'the South' as a region. Regional studies distinguish between the 'Old South', referring generally to the antebellum slave economy of the plantation system, and the 'New South'. The term 'New South' has been used variously to refer to the nineteenth-century postbellum period, the 1930s New Deal period and the post-Second World War Sunbelt boom. Historians concur that the origins of the New South date to the end of Reconstruction in 1877, when white conservative Democrats completed their takeover of the region from a biracial coalition of northern-supported Republicans.[26] The southern Democrats' pro-business, anti-tax agenda underpinned vast socioeconomic changes in the region during the final decades of the nineteenth century, including railroad construction and investment in timber, textiles and mining industries. Northern capital, attracted by low wages and natural resources, gravitated toward primary commodity production, thereby limiting industrialization's effect on urbanization and capital accumulation in the region.[27] Accompanying these developments was a shift in race relations, defined by so-called 'Jim Crow' laws, away from the Reconstruction efforts to improve racial equality and toward the reaffirmation of racial hierarchy. Jim Crow was first associated with southern state's laws, including Florida's, which mandated racial segregation on trains in the 1880s. It became over the decades a complex set of laws, policies and practices that institutionalized racial difference and the political and economic subjugation of 'blacks' in the New South.[28]

Jim Crow rule played a key role in controlling black labour and keeping the region's wages low during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in rural areas.[29] First, violence and the threat of violence against southern blacks were important in controlling the South's black agricultural labour force in the 1930s and 1940s. This aspect of Jim Crow will be elaborated in a later section on labour control in sugarcane production in southern Florida. Second, the cultural practices of the period served to define and reinforce racial identities and interracial power relations. Much of the Jim Crow system was based on customs of 'unwritten and flexible rules that varied from place to place'[30] and which served to choreograph the daily practice of race relations. In the South's rural communities, race and race relations were 'performed' through encounters in the non-segregated spaces such as general stores and roadways.[31] For example, store clerks would only wait on blacks when every white customer had been attended to, though no law or written policy enforced this practice. In countless everyday situations such as these, whites 'performed the script of racial inferiority'.[32]

Racial identity and race relations were also performed in the formal sense of theatrical staging. 'Cultural performance' – a planned public event through which racial identities and race relations are constructed by acting out stories of the past – was at times a key part of the process of racialization in the Jim Crow South.[33] In post-Reconstruction Mississippi, performances organized by the descendants of the slave-owning class romanticized life in planters' mansions and idealized the lives of slaves, emphasizing the paternalism of the Old South when 'a planter looked after the welfare of his slaves'.[34] The ideology of paternalism projected through such performances was central to the justification of Jim Crow and the maintenance of racial subordination in the South. Indeed, efforts to romanticize life in the Old South – paralleled elsewhere in

historic preservation movements in Savannah and Charleston – were important for constructing racial identities and race relations far beyond the bounds of the region. During the 1930s the popular southern novel *Gone With the Wind* (1936) and the film version (1939), along with films such as *Jezebel* (1938), served to romanticize the Old South for a national audience. Thus racial identities and race relations in the South, idealized as paternal and benevolent, were performed through a variety of media from the local to the national scale.

This backward-looking romanticism intersected with the ideology of modernization taking root in the New South – evidenced in various ways under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's (FDR) New Deal – in the racialization of the southern labour market. One manifestation of the New South's embrace of modernization was the extraordinary popular response to the Tennessee Valley Authority, which 'gave rise to a new vision of progress' in the region.[35] Another was the widespread enthusiasm for economic development in the South during the 1930s, when, '[i]n their quest for industrial plants and new capital'[36] southerners looked northward for investors. It was a vision of modernization that included racial discrimination, which the FDR administration accepted in the operation of its own programmes and promulgated through labour legislation.[37] During the New Deal, collaboration between northern and southern Democrats protected the region's particular form of economic and political subjugation of blacks. Planters and industrialists 'depended on the expansion, consolidation, and enforcement of Jim Crow rule to keep labour cheap and disciplined'.[38] In the South, for example, the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act benefited mostly white planters with large landholdings, while tenant farmers (almost all black) were adversely affected.[39] In many cases in the New South, New Deal federal agencies in charge of regulating employment 'continued to segregate jobs according to the employer preference and local custom'.[40] An immediate effect of federal involvement in labour relations was to widen the wage gap between blacks and whites in the South.[41]

Modernization in the New South hinged largely on capital investment from the north, as exemplified in the development of Florida's sugar agroindustry. New Deal-era agrarian capitalists in Florida came from the ranks of the auto industry and Wall Street.[42] The professional biographies and philosophies of employee relations of these individuals are key for understanding the historical geographies of race and labour in the south Florida sugar industry. Several directors of USSC were stockholders and officers of GM, most notably Charles Stewart Mott, formerly vice-president of GM. Mott and his family owned 68 per cent of USSC's common stock and held several directorships on the board. In the 1920s, Mott was listed as second in command at GM. Mott's early career coincided with the period during which 'many of the major innovations in American welfare practice originated in the private sector'.[43] A significant impetus for Mott's interest in corporate paternalism was to undermine labour unionism. Mott was vehemently opposed to unionization, and once suggested that the 1930s sit-down strikers in GM's Flint, Michigan plants should have been ordered to move on by the Governor, 'and if they didn't they should have been shot'.[44] Mott was a central figure in developing the largest US corporation (GM); and in his

paternalistic approach to workers' 'welfare', his professional life is illustrative of major themes in US social history.

He founded one of the country's largest philanthropic organizations, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, as a means to spread his ideas of social engineering. In a 1972 study, Nielsen stated that the Mott Foundation 'stands in almost black-and-white contrast to the typical large foundation in its objectives, program, and operating methods'.[45] Whereas most large foundations have a 'vague notion' of purpose, Mott's is highly focused, funds its own programmes and is directed at specific localities. In contrast to the informal culture of other foundations, 'Mott has applied the techniques of modern industrial management ... to its philanthropies'.[46] Nielsen characterized the 'Mott method' as 'one of aggressive evangelism and rigidly organized civic uplift, arbitrarily imposed from the top'.[47] Thus, when his family gained majority ownership of USSC, Mott's ideas of corporate paternalism and industrial managerialism were melded to an agroindustrial enterprise based on plantation production embedded in the racism of the Jim Crow South.

The other key figures in the development of the south Florida agroindustrial complex were the Bittings, Clarence and William, of Bitting Inc., a New York-based management company.[48] Clarence, who together with his brother owned 10 per cent of USSC's stock, was president of the corporation and chairman of its executive committee from the time of its reorganization until 1946. Early in his career he brought his northern expertise in financing and managing industrial properties to the New South, managing a large Mississippi cotton plantation prior to investing in USSC.[49] During his 15 years as president Clarence Bitting served as the key spokesperson of the company, articulating, in Congressional testimony, press releases and company publications, an agroindustrial-corporatist ideology to support USSC's expansionist goals. One of the most powerful components of Bitting's corporate propaganda was the paternalistic characterization of USSC's treatment of plantation labour as more socially progressive as compared with the treatment in Caribbean plantations, which he portrayed as oppressive.[50] In one of his periodical booklets, he took the reader on a mock tour of the company's plantations, pointing out the 'neat, orderly and well-maintained cottages of the happy, contented plantation workers'.[51] Later in the same publication, he suggested that the company's paternalism was smart business management: 'A well-paid, contented working force makes for efficient operation.'[52] In a subsequent publication he argued, 'It is poor economy to use shacks for housing employees; the field worker and his family who reside in a good house are healthy and happy.'[53] Indeed, Carey McWilliams, a keen critic of labour relations in California agribusiness, wrote approvingly of USSC's 'good housing for its employees' and 'paternalism on a large scale', as well as Bitting's 'scorn for the notion of "farming as a mode of life".'[54] However, a contemporaneous account found that local workers actually preferred not to live on the plantations, however neat and orderly the housing, and USSC's migrant field labour comprised solitary men whose families resided elsewhere in rural poverty.[55]

In his public writings, Bitting stressed the importance of bringing 'to agriculture the viewpoint and technique of the American industrialist'.[56] Large-scale, industrialized agriculture was constructed as morally superior to small farmers because of its socially

'progressive' treatment of labour. In correspondence to Florida Senator Claude Pepper, he argued against relaxing labour regulations for small farmers on the grounds that it 'would mean the utter breakdown of the high standards [for labour conditions] now established in the Everglades' and a return to the 'worst features of share-cropping and tenant-farming'.[57] Bitting's 1940 Congressional testimony similarly suggested that the government 'encourage larger operating units' in agriculture as a means to expand employment for seasonal labour.

Bitting's presidency overlapped what historians term the 'crucial decade', 1935–45, during which the South was transformed by the Great Depression, New Deal, and the Second World War, and his corporate publications are best understood in this context.[58] First, the New Deal approach to agricultural reform had worsened conditions for tenants and small farmers as large landowners benefited from subsidies and mechanization, with the result that during the 1930s more than one million people left the South. Second, the South's distinctive identity was under scrutiny as the popular press in the North emphasized the region's cultural and economic backwardness. This 'othering' of the South by northern writers had been an established, if paradoxical, practice since Reconstruction,[59] but it took on a particular meaning in the context of the New Deal. When Secretary of Labour Frances Perkins in 1933 disparaged the South as an 'untapped market for shoes', he was speaking as a representative of the FDR administration, which had targeted the region as 'the Nation's No. 1 economic problem'.[60] Third, it was during this time that scholars such as Howard Odum and Rupert Vance developed a scholarly approach to the study of southern regionalism and various academic disciplines took the South, especially race relations, as their object of study.

In sum, Jim Crow, the New Deal and Old South romanticism intersected at the historical moment and site of the establishment of southern Florida's sugar plantation complex. Though southern Florida was not part of the Old South, it was a Jim Crow state and the northern industrialists who invested in sugarcane production did not question this system. Indeed, they embraced it and took full advantage. There was never any question that the manual labour force would be exclusively black or that there would be separate 'quarters' for blacks on the company's plantations. As we will see, USSC recruited seasonal field labour only from black communities whose members were subject to the strict controls of Jim Crow and associated vagrancy laws. Company officials emphasized in their testimonies and publications the modern, paternalistic and socially progressive character of USSC's sugarcane production, though the whole system was dependent on a racialized labour force with roots in the slave plantations of the past. Indeed, USSC tapped the Old South romanticism, building the Clewiston Inn for visiting company executives and dignitaries in the style of 'southern plantation architecture'.[61] The idea that USSC's corporate propaganda 'made sense' was aided by prevailing white nostalgia for the Old South's plantations and the idealization of historical race relations between planters and slaves. Mott's beliefs about and company policies for the social betterment of labour backed the company's propaganda, yet the recruitment of seasonal workers in a racialized regional labour market belied the idea of progressive labour relations. The contradictions between USSC's dependence on

cheap labour disciplined by Jim Crow violence and its corporate paternalism would never be fully reconciled, and would ultimately prove untenable.

Race and place in labour market regulation

When investors and planters planned the establishment of Florida's sugar plantation system early in the twentieth century, they envisaged tapping into the South's, low-cost and highly racialized labour market. It is 'well established'[62] that prior to the Second World War the South functioned as a separate regional labour market, completely disarticulated from national and international labour markets. Labour circulated within the region in an east–west direction rather than beyond the region in a north–south direction, a pattern that was reinforced by the existence of a shared regional culture, familial and friendship bonds stretching across the South, and familiar and relatively consistent agro-environmental conditions.[63] By the 1920s racial wage differentials had appeared in the South among manual labourers, and increasing racial differences in work experience and education meant that blacks were virtually restricted to agriculture. Agricultural wages in the southern states were half or less those in other regions of the country.[64] It was a market 'systematically structured by institutional forces and power relations'[65] in the South, specifically by the institutionalized racism of Jim Crow and by the government agencies responsible for regulating labour supply. In regulating the supply of labour to USSC's sugar plantations, regional social institutions and state agencies both reflected and accentuated prevailing ideas of essential racial characteristics.

This separate southern regional labour market was the source of field workers for USSC's sugar plantations. The US Employment Service (USES), which directed and oversaw the interstate movement of labour in the 1930s and 1940s, was central to USSC's labour recruitment efforts. The USES Farm Labour Report forms from the 1940s listed six southern states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee – as the sources of 'colored' labour for sugarcane cultivation and harvesting. USES offices in these states were in constant communication to coordinate the movement of workers in the region. These black workers were mostly farmers, typically cotton sharecroppers or itinerant farm labourers. Black sharecroppers from the northern parts of the South were recruited during the slack periods of their agricultural cycle to work on USSC's plantations during the peak of cane cutting (Figure 2). The Great Depression deepened this pool of labour, as increasing numbers of sharecroppers were driven out of tenancy and the proportion of farm labourers in the black rural population rose from 4.9 per cent in 1910 to 25 per cent in 1940.[66]

In the years preceding the Second World War, state agencies multiplied and the regulation of USSC's labour supply grew diffuse and complex. In April 1935 President Roosevelt, as part of the 'second' New Deal, created the Resettlement Administration to address the problems of the rural poor; in 1937 it was restructured as the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and became part of the USDA. At this time, a Migratory Farm Labour Division was created, with responsibility for administering a labour camp programme. The first FSA camps on the east coast were built in Belle Glade, Florida: the

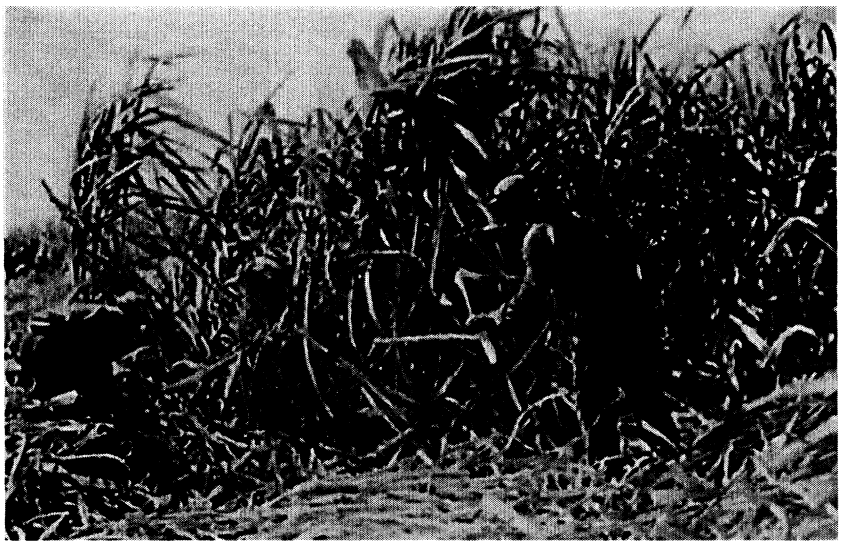

FIGURE 2 Harvesting sugarcane, United States Sugar Corporation, Clewiston, Florida. M. Wolcott, 'Harvesting sugarcane, United States Sugar Corporation, Clewiston, Florida', Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration: Office of War Information Photograph Collection (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1939), obtained online http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?fsaall:8:./temp/ ~ammem_UxPN::, 3 July 2005.

Osceola Camp for white migrants, the Okeechobee Camp for blacks.[67] The FSA, the USES, the Sugar Section of the USDA, state land-use planning committees, the Extension Service and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics were some of the agencies and organizations responsible for various aspects of regulating the supply or mitigating the conditions of agricultural labour.

The agencies involved were continually reformed or retitled and individuals moved from one to another, thus creating a complex set of relationships shaped by overlapping jurisdictions, personal ties and oversight responsibilities in labour market restructuring. Individuals working for one agency often were required to file reports on other agencies. Their reports provide valuable insights into labour conditions in the sugar plantations, the importance of racialization in structuring the labour market and the close associations between labour agencies and USSC. The case of Allison French is illustrative. According to a 1942 Bureau of Employment Security (BES) report, French developed an intimate working relationship with USSC in the 1930s, first as manager of the Florida State Employment Service (FSES) and later in a position with USES.[68] Because the USES was the federal agency primarily involved in recruiting agricultural workers to the sugar plantations, French's position there made him a key player in the perennial drama of the 1940s labour shortages. As an earlier inter-agency report noted, over the years 'a system of cooperation' had been

> worked out between Mr. Allison T. French ... and Mr. Von Mach of the Sugar Company, that seems ideal. When in need of additional workers, the Sugar Company advises the Employment Service the locality

> where they might find the required number ... If the local supply is exhausted, which is usually the case, the Sugar Company advises the Employment Service the locality where they might find the required number of experienced sugar cane cutters and a clearance order is issued.[69]

The 'ideal' cooperation between Misters French and Von Mach reflected both the fact that USSC made the most frequent and largest requests for labour and the hand-in-glove relationship between business and the state in regulating labour markets.

So in tune with USSC's needs was French that his actions sometimes appeared designed not to regulate the agricultural labour market but to confer legitimacy on the company's labour recruitment activities. During a BES inspection of the USES office in 1942, for example, it was discovered that the only request for labour that French had at the time was for 1 000 farm workers, which had been placed by USSC 'after the fact'.[70] When USSC had attempted to recruit workers in Missouri the local USES office there had intervened, asking that the FSES guarantee Missouri workers round-trip transportation. This request was forwarded to French, who then confirmed with USSC their order for 1,000 workers and also supported the company's assertion that it 'was unable at the time to make any commitment regarding transportation'. The BES report reveals the comfortable relationship between state regulatory officers and corporate management, noting that 'Mr. French was very anxious to complete arrangements for placing these workers with the Sugar Corporation'.[71] The interests of the labour regulators and the company at this time were so well harmonized that 'many workers could not differentiate between USES and USSC employees'.[72]

French headed the regional field office of the USES in West Palm Beach in the 1940s, and was thus a key actor in regulating the agricultural labour market for USSC and other growers. The BES report noted that French had deliberately arranged the office to be inhospitable: 'Although the office was located in an exceptionally large storeroom, counters were placed in such a way that applicants (Negro applicants in particular) were forced to stand outside until their names were called.'[73] In his own reports, French explained his role vis-a-vis the 'situation' of the local labour market, which had 'resolved itself into one of trying to make labour work which won't work; redistributing labour here on FSA contracts; and trying to make intra-area distribution of labour not now working'.[74] His strategies for agricultural labour recruitment were guided by ideas of essential racial characteristics prevalent at the time. In direct contradiction to economic theories of labour markets but in line with the racism of the day, he argued for keeping wages for black agricultural workers low, and repeatedly made recommendations for a ceiling wage for piece work. French's reasoning – and its racist underpinnings – are revealed in one of his typical assessments of the local black labour force:

> It has been clearly demonstrated year after year that production is in inverse ratio to piece-work wage scales. A very large number of negroes (a majority of them, in the opinion of the growers) are not interested in making more money, but they are interested in making the same money quicker ... The ones who will work all day are few and far between, and those who will work every day are practically non-existent.[75]

This thinking was a central pillar in the construction of a racialized agricultural labour force, and was prevalent in the Jim Crow South. USSC's personnel director, M. E. Von Mach, testified at a 1937 federal hearing that 'if you were to give the "nigger" more money than he gets now he would leave 2 months sooner because he has too much money to spend'.[76] Such reasoning was employed to justify passing over the local labour market in surrounding counties – whose members increasingly refused to work for USSC's low wages – and recruiting workers for the sugar plantations from the wider regional labour market.

Such essentialist characterizations of black workers' productivity had direct material consequences for the regional labour force, and ultimately for the geographical restructuring of the agricultural labour market. Sugar producers and labour regulators invoked the argument that black workers' productivity was inversely related to wage rates in order to resist raising wages, and to defend the need to recruit labour from outside the local labour market. Opposition to wage increases was accompanied by paternalistic claims that the company provided for workers' housing, health care and entertainment. Within the local agricultural labour market, however, cane cutting was not a favoured option. For example, under far less physically arduous conditions and in less time, bean pickers on farms surrounding the plantations could earn three times as much per day as cane cutters.[77] Thus in December 1942 French reported from '400 to 1000 idle negroes are seen daily in the Glades area who will not work because they have made so much money under the insane price-bidding war which has been current in that area'.[78] The problem of 'idle negroes' was thus attributed to irrationally high wages, the solution for which was to import agricultural workers from outside the local labour market in order to 'induce or force idle labour to work'.[79] Sounding like an agroindustry spokesperson, French explained,

> It is believed by a great many growers that if all of the labourers in the area could be put to work and made to put in full days and full weeks, that no shortage would be apparent this winter. This is one of the strong reasons why growers favor importation of Bahama negroes since they would be subject to control. With a sufficient number of Bahamans in here, it is believed resulting conditions would force idle domestic labour to work also.[80]

The growers' thinking reported by French reveals their two primary concerns about agricultural labour: mobilizing an adequate seasonal workforce and controlling workers once they were at the worksite. These two problems were inextricably linked on the sugar plantations, and their ultimate resolution depended on an elaboration of essentialist ideas of the racial and intraracial characteristics of labour.

Labour control and the role of racialization

The strategies of labour recruitment and control in Florida's sugar industry were embedded in the region's geography of race and racism. Northern capital investment was attracted to Florida by the prospect of a segregated black labour force, controlled by Jim Crow laws and supported by vagrancy legislation[81]. This was reflected in USSC's

labour recruitment and employment practices. The company recruited their seasonal field labour force from the ranks of southern black sharecroppers and farm labourers. Whites were employed permanently as skilled mechanics, timekeepers, foremen, storekeepers, overseers and clerical staff, and lived in Clewiston, the nearby company town. Approximately 90 per cent of USSC's employees were black, involved in manual field labour, and housed in one of 11 plantation villages dispersed among the sugarcane fields (Figure 3). By housing field workers at the site of production, USSC was able to assert a far greater degree of labour control than would be possible otherwise, and with less worry about having their practices observed or challenged. During the Great Depression, USSC's twinned strategies of labour recruitment and control served to keep wages down while assuring an ample supply of labour. When the US geared up industrial production for the Second World War, USSC's strategies became less effective, leading eventually to a geographical restructuring of the company's sourcing of a seasonal labour force.

As the 1940s began, events conspired to create a crisis of labour supply in USSC's sugarcane harvest. First, the gap that had grown since the 1920s between wages for whites and blacks and between the North and the South set the stage for a massive outmigration of southern black labour to northern factories at the start of the Second World War, and for a consequent labour crisis.[82] For the South's other plantation crop,

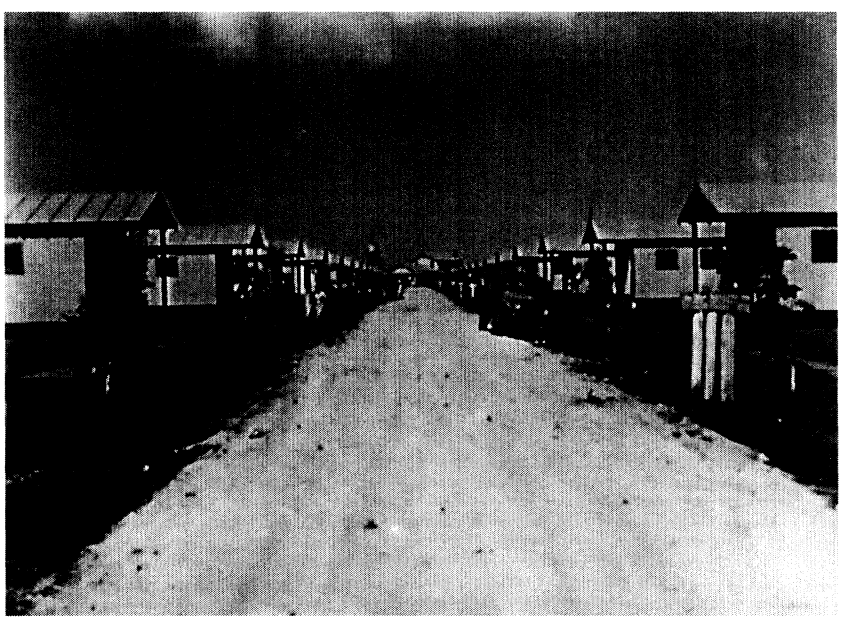

FIGURE 3 United States Sugar Corporation village for negro workers in cane fields, Clewiston, Florida. M. Wolcott, 'USSC (United States Sugar Corporation) village for Negro workers in cane fields. Clewiston, Florida,' Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration: Office of War Information Photograph Collection (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1939), obtained online http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?fsaall:4:./temp/~ammem_00jl::, 3 July, 2005.

cotton, increased labour scarcity 'provided new impetus for a viable cotton-harvesting machine'.[83] Until then, black tenant, sharecropper and resident wage labourer families picked all the South's cotton by hand. Labour scarcity and other economic factors led International Harvester to put the first commercially marketed mechanical cotton picker into production in 1948. Florida sugarcane growers did not have the mechanization option. Although USSC possessed mechanical sugarcane harvesters as early as 1930, they were technically and economically infeasible and ended up being permanently mothballed in 1933. The Florida environment made mechanization especially challenging. The muck soils, the fact that Florida cane lay nearly flat, and periodic freezing presented significant technological barriers to mechanization well into the 1980s.[84] For the time being, USSC would not be able to solve its labour crisis through mechanization.

Second was the increasing scrutiny of conditions for migratory labour that had emerged in the 1930s and culminated in southern Florida in an FBI investigation of USSC's labour practices.[85] The complaints received at FBI field offices suggested that USSC's strategies for recruiting and controlling black harvest labour, often aided by local law enforcement, included debt peonage, forced labour, and even killings.[86] Word circulated among black communities in the South that USSC was running a 'slave camp' at its sugar plantations.[87] In letters to federal officials, concerned family members in Tennessee and Alabama reported that field hands were guarded all night by 'armed guards and not allowed to write home', and that foremen carried 'Black Jacks and Pistols that men have been Killed because they insisted for the wages'.[88] The FBI conducted dozens of interviews with black agricultural migrant workers across the South in 1942 and 1943. Investigations found that black workers attempting to leave plantations were 'shot at' and 'returned to the plantations and forced to work'.[89] Interview subjects reported that USSC plantation supervisors wore guns and carried blackjacks, workers were threatened with death should they try to leave, beatings were common and conditions of debt peonage prevailed.[90]

In November 1942 a two-count indictment alleging violations of workers' 13th Amendment rights was brought against USSC, M.E. Von Mach (personnel director) and three other employees in federal district court in Tampa. Though the case was dismissed in the spring of 1943, when the presiding judge ruled the grand jury had been improperly impanelled, USSC executives knew that another method of securing labour was needed. The onset of the Second World War had produced a general agriculture labour scarcity and the racialized regional labour market upon which sugar production had been based was dissolving. USSC executives found themselves struggling to protect their investments in plantation production as the remains of the South's postbellum plantation economy crumbled around them.

Acute agricultural labour shortages had become the norm for USSC. By 1941, USSC had 22 000 acres in sugarcane in three counties bounding Lake Okeechobee, Hendry, Palm Beach and Glades. Florida sugar growers needed about 4 500 field hands during peak periods, half to cut the cane and trim it and pile it and half to load the cane in the wagons.[91] The local USES office reported that the labour shortage for sugarcane work had grown from 1 000 workers in May 1942 to 1 418 in April 1943.[92] With labour in short

supply, USSC was 'making a desperate effort to secure labour to cut the cane which must be cut within thirty days if it is to be saved'.[93] As Florida's agricultural labour supply crisis unfolded, various tried and true methods of forcing local black workers to cut cane were employed with new vigour. Black workers in the local labour market had grown wary of USSC, as the 1942 BES report described:

> When asked if local sources of labour supply had been tapped to meet the company's needs, he explained that no attempt had been made to recruit Florida labour for cane cutting, first, because no definite orders were on hand, and second because *Negro labour in Florida will not work for the Sugar Corporation*. Mr. French could not explain this situation except that certain 'rumors' about poor treatment at the hands of Sugar Corporation foremen had always circulated among the Negro population. These 'rumors' he explained were unfounded, although it was true that Negroes were occasionally beaten for attempting to leave the job when they owed debts at the company's commissary, and others were sometimes required to work as many as eighteen hours a day at cane cutting.[94]

That a federal labour official could admit that workers were beaten and forced to work 18-hour days while denying rumours of mistreatment speaks volumes about the standard of working conditions for blacks on the plantations. Combined with the tight labour market of the war years, such 'rumours' probably influenced migrant agricultural workers' decisions to refuse work on the plantations, as the USES reported it was 'unable to get any of them to go to the Glades'.[95]

Though local black workers tried to avoid working for USSC, vagrancy legislation allowed local law enforcement officials to arrest blacks without restraint.[96] French exploited this power in an attempt to meet the growing agricultural labour gap:

> Belle Glade and Pahokee officials have notified a joint meeting of negro ministers and juke joint operators that beginning Monday a vigorous enforcement of vagrancy laws will be put into effect that will operate on the slogan 'Work for the Farmer or Work the Streets'.[97]

Vagrancy laws were one part of an array of mechanisms under Jim Crow that facilitated the control of black agricultural labour in the sugarcane region. Spatial segregation of blacks on the local scale allowed closer surveillance and monitoring of the pool of agricultural labour. Located near the shores of Lake Okeechobee, the towns of South Bay and Belle Glade, where a city ordinance required that 'all Negroes ... be off the streets by 10:30 p.m.', were designated as 'black' towns.[98] Adjacent to Clewiston, owned and controlled by USSC, black residents resided in a district known as Harlem. A standard tactic for dealing with agricultural labour shortages was to send local law enforcement officers into the circumscribed black communities surrounding the plantations and round up violators of vagrancy and curfew laws. In a February 1943 summary, French was able to report, 'Idle labour has been considerably reduced by the enforcement of vagrancy laws.'[99]

At the same time, it was becoming clear that labour shortages were persisting, and that the more extreme mechanisms of labour control, once accepted as the norm in the Jim Crow South, were becoming less tenable, socially and politically. Hoping to secure state help in finding new sources of cheap, controllable labour, regulatory officers and company officials articulated an intraracial typology of black workers based on their place of origin. Essential differences were drawn between urban and rural blacks, local

Florida and other southern blacks, and domestic and foreign blacks, and among a range of Caribbean black nationalities including Bahamian and Jamaican.[100] French suggested that urban blacks were unsuitable for plantation work, noting that the 'company [USSC] endeavors to get only farm workers but occasionally "city Negros" are brought in who fight, gamble and carve'.[101] An administrator in the War Food Administration worried that certain black nationalities might baulk at performing the subservient roles to which blacks had been cast under Jim Crow, observing delicately that Jamaicans were less 'amenable to acceptance of the traditional local racial differentials'.[102] 'These people,' he explained, 'while mostly belonging to the negro race, have a set of mores and social patterns radically different from those of the American negro.'[103] The Acting US Secretary of Interior recommended cane cutters from St Croix, who he noted were 'generally honest, law-abiding, church-attending citizens'.[104] Whites, it should go without saying, lacked the essential qualities necessary for field labour. When planters were advised to use the 'Food for Victory' programme to recruit (patriotic) white cane cutters, French dismissed the idea out of hand. 'Experience has continually shown that white people are much more susceptible to "muck itch" than are negroes,' he explained.[105] American blacks also were now portrayed as recalcitrant and unsuitable. In the midst of the labour crisis, French claimed that there were 'probably from one to three thousand idle negro farm hands in the Glades and the Coastal areas', who would not work.[106] USSC officials, after expanding sugar production on the backs of southern black labour for over a decade, curiously argued that 'black men in America simply lack this skill [of cutting], just plain don't have it'.[107]

Underlying these efforts to characterize suitable sugarcane harvest labour were the desire for an easily controllable workforce and the need to avoid raising wages in order to recruit workers. As French explained,

> it is hoped that some methods may be evolved for preventing the competitive bidding for agricultural labour, for compelling the vast amount of domestic idle labour to work, and for importation of labour to augment the insufficient supply of willing labour.[108]

With American blacks essentialized as unsuitable, the industry turned to the so-called 'offshore' workers: blacks resident in the Caribbean islands. Growers first looked to the nearest islands, favouring the 'importation of Bahama negroes since they would be subject to control'.[109] The key to controlling Bahamian labour was to bring them into the US 'for agricultural work only, with the provision for their return in case they strayed from agriculture'.[110]

House Joint Resolution 96, written by the American Farm Bureau Federation with input from various farm organizations, provided US agricultural employers in general, and Florida growers in particular, with the means they sought to effect the control of a racialized work force.[111] The resulting bill, Public Law 45, gave the Farm Bureau virtually every concession it demanded from the state's programme for regulating wartime migrant labour allocation, including the discontinuance of various restrictions related to minimum wage, housing conditions and unionization activities.[112] Farm worker advocates, among them Eleanor Roosevelt, had urged President Roosevelt to veto the bill, but, having promised his support to House and Senate leaders, he signed it

on 29 April 1943.[113] Public Law 45, otherwise known as the 'Peonage Law', removed FSA oversight of migratory labour and shifted control to the locally controlled Extension Service.[114] The bill's provisions further marginalized domestic workers by constructing barriers to their movement and shifting government funding for transportation towards offshore workers.

The first agreement to bring offshore workers to Florida was made between the USDA and the Bahamian government shortly before Public Law 45 was signed into law. The first shipment of Bahamian workers arrived on the plantations on 13 April 1943, in an operation coordinated among several federal agencies. The FSA recruited on the islands, US Navy doctors performed the physicals and US Army cargo planes flew the workers to Miami. There they were 'met by FSA personnel, loaded on chartered buses and taken to points of destination, where the USES takes over'.[115] These workers were brought in at the behest of sugar growers exclusively to harvest cane, and were sent back to the Bahamas when the work was completed. Each worker was processed from point of origin to field and back under tight government and company control, and was subject to summary deportation. Contracts stipulated that a worker would be immediately returned 'to his point of recruitment' for any 'act of misconduct or indiscipline'.[116] Such procedures and terms, French happily noted, 'gives us our first control of farm labour which may be used as an entering wedge toward stabilization' of wages and labour supply.[117]

Encouraged by US officials, numerous other agreements were made during the war with the governments of Jamaica, Barbados and British Honduras for offshore workers. Arrangements for bringing in offshore workers were made government-to-government until late 1947, when, with the demise of the War Food Administration, the US government ended direct participation in the programme. Beginning then, the programme was conducted under a private enterprise-to-government arrangement involving a tripartite contract between the companies, workers and governments of the countries of origin, with federal oversight with regard to immigration and naturalization laws.

Then, in March 1951, the President's Commission on Migratory Labour, appointed by President Harry Truman, issued their report. The section of the report dealing with the British West Indies (BWI)/Bahamian programme was critical of the lack of 'official vigilance for the protection of living and working standards of alien farm labourers'.[118] Because BWI/Bahamian workers' contracts included provisions for withholding of forced savings, the Commission concluded that the 'greater vulnerability of the British West Indian workers to financial discipline' was a reason why the 'British West Indians deserted from their contracts much less frequently than the Mexicans'.[119] Following the commission's report, Public Law 78, enacted on 12 July 1951, extended the Second World War agricultural *bracero* programme, by which Mexican farmworkers were contracted to work in the US. As originally drafted, the bill included 'agricultural workers within the Western Hemisphere'; but at the request of 'the agricultural interests of Florida', who 'much prefer not to have a subsidy from the Government in this connection', the BWI programme was excluded.[120] Enacted the following year, Public Law 414, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, set the terms under which

temporary workers, other than *braceros*, would be admitted, defining the category of temporary alien workers in section H-ii, or H-2. Through the H-2 worker programme, the Florida sugar industry was able to secure for decades a steady supply of black field labour from the former slave plantation economies of the Caribbean.

Discussion and conclusion

The agricultural labour shortages produced by the Second World War and the increased public knowledge of conditions of debt peonage and violence on sugar plantations altered the relations of power between southern black labour and growers. The contradictions produced by the layering of northern industrial production practices on a southern plantation racial formation had been exposed. The slippage between the USSC's paternalist claims of 'happy, contented plantation workers' and actual historical and contemporary conditions for southern black cane workers created a chasm that could not be filled. The importation of foreign labour allowed growers to recover their position of power, and obviated the need to address the regional cultural and economic legacies of racism in which Florida's sugar plantations were embedded. In terms of labour control, the threat of deportation of BWI workers took the place of the instruments once applied to southern blacks under Jim Crow. The importation of Caribbean blacks under the H-2 worker programme persisted for the next half-century, undoubtedly because it provided growers with 'a formidable instrument of control'.[121]

In the two decades investigated here, the availability of labour for cutting cane was not simply an economic question of class relations, but also and inextricably a cultural one of racial identities and race relations. A racialized labour force was key to the development of USSC's sugar plantations. While Bitting and other USSC officials stressed the modern, industrial and economically efficient character of their operations, sugarcane production was based on a racialized labour supply with roots in the historical slave plantations of the US South and British West Indies. Cane cutting was a racially inscribed job category. South Florida was not exceptional in its racism, but the racialized structure of the sugar plantation labour force was distinctive. Central to this structure were ideas about who could and should cut cane and why, which were particular to this place. Racialized labour markets thus need to be understood through an examination of the relations between people and places, and of the specific labour requirements of industries in particular historical and geographical contexts.

The case of Florida's sugar agroindustry illustrates not only the centrality of geography to processes of racialization and 'how space works to condition the operation of power and the constitution of relational identities', but also the dynamism and instability of racial categories.[122] When the industry faced the 1940s labour shortage, broad racial essentializations between black and white workers had lost much of their power for mobilizing seasonal cane cutters. Sugar industry investors in collaboration with state labour regulators reimagined the ideal cane worker. They elaborated intraracial categories of black labour to argue that southern blacks could not or would not cut cane, and that BWI blacks were ideally suited to the task. In

essentializing the intraracial characteristics of southern versus BWI blacks, the industry was able to avoid raising wages, increase its control over its field workers and win state support for a unique programme of importing offshore labour into rural areas of high unemployment and poverty. With the implementation of the H-2 programme, the cane-cutting workforce remained racialized as black, but the labour market was rescaled. Indeed, the idea that only blacks could cut cane was never seriously questioned, but the geographical origin of suitable black labour was. Thus the meanings associated with race and place shifted with the changing political-economic context within which the sugar industry recruited its racialized work force.

This study also demonstrates the power of linking the literatures on the geographies of race and labour. Processes of racialization were inseparable from industry strategies of labour recruitment and the instruments of labour control. As the geography of labour markets was rescaled to the international level, the primary mechanism of labour control shifted from Jim Crow to summary deportation of foreign black workers from the BWI. Returning to questions of the regulation of labour markets, both Jim Crow policies and the H-2 programme were as far from the neoclassical economics idea of a 'free' market as can be imagined. State labour regulators and local law enforcement officials took for granted the idea of a racialized labour market, and collaborated closely with industry officials both in constructing essential racial characteristics – which conformed to the industry's specific labour requirements – and in disciplining labour. The success of the collaborative efforts of agribusiness and the state in finding new sources of labour depended heavily on constructions of the relationship between race, place and labour suitability. The essentializing discourses of race and place provided the rationale and ideological foundation for winning state support for the importation of agricultural labour from the Caribbean.

Finally, this analysis of USSC contributes to our understanding of how historical processes of racialization are bound together with the political and economic processes of regional agroindustrial development. To talk about labour recruitment and control in Florida's sugar agroindustry is to talk about the meanings of race and place. Likewise, to talk about racialization processes in 1940s south Florida is to talk of political economy – alliances between the state and private capital, state regulation of labour markets and the interregional and international flows of capital and labour. Indeed, attention to the role of the state is critical to understanding the mutually constitutive processes of racialization, labour markets and place-making in southern Florida. The state's importance can readily be seen in the activities of the New Deal agencies that regulated migratory agricultural labour and the later federal H-2 worker legislation. As Peck cautions, however, 'It would be a mistake to reduce state labour regulation solely to purposive government intervention through the deployment of labour market programs.' This is particularly evident in the Jim Crow South, where many state institutions, laws and practices did not specifically address labour market regulation, but were nevertheless central to defining and disciplining a migratory agricultural labour force. Such an understanding of the state provides a critical point of engagement with theories of racialization, most powerfully illustrated by Omi and Winant's notion of the 'racial state'.[123] By engaging labour geography's ideas of the state with theories of

racialization, we can better reflect the complexity, particularity and dynamism demonstrated by the case of Florida's sugar agroindustry.

Notes

[1] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Weekly agricultural report, March 5', R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1943 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1942).

[2] J. Moran, quoted in F. Manuel, *Sugar production in Florida*, National Defense Migration Hearings, 77th US Congress, 2nd session (1942), p. 12965.

[3] L. Peake and R. Schein, 'Racing geography into the new millennium: studies of "race" and North American geographies', *Social and cultural geography* **1** (2000), pp. 133–42. The renaissance is marked by the NSF-sponsored workshop on race and geography held at the University of Kentucky in 1997 and two subsequent special issues on the topic in *Journal of social and cultural geography* **1** (2000) and *Professional geographer* **54** (2002).

[4] P. Jackson and J. Penrose, 'Introduction: placing "race" and nation', in P. Jackson and J. Penrose, eds, *Constructions of race, place and nation* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 1–26.

[5] Kobayashi and Peake define racialization as 'the process by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often involving social/spatial segregation and always constituting racialized places': A. Kobayashi and L. Peake, 'Racism out of place: thoughts on whiteness and an antiracist geography in the new millennium', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **90** (2000), p. 393. The idea of racialization is similar to Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation, which 'emphasizes the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories': M. Omi and H. Winant, *Racial formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd edn (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 4. See also A. Bonnett and A. Nayak, 'Cultural geographies of racialization: the territory of race', in K. Anderson, M. Domosh, S. Pile and N. Thrift, eds, *Handbook of cultural geography* (London, Sage, 2003), p. 300; and C. Nash, 'Cultural geography: anti-racist geographies', *Progress in human geography* **27** (2003), pp. 637–48.

[6] Omi and Winant, *Racial formation*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[8] Jackson and Penrose, 'Introduction', p. 5. Several historical studies of geography and the social construction of race and racialization have emerged in recent years, including: D. Delaney, *Race, place, and the law: 1836–1948* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1998); A. Maddrell, 'Discourses of race and gender and the comparative method in geography school texts 1830–1918', *Environment and planning D: society and space* **16** (1998), pp. 81–103; M. Domosh, 'A "civilized" commerce: gender, "race", and empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition', *Cultural geographies* **9** (2002), 181–201.

[9] S. Hoelscher, 'Making place, making race: performances of whiteness in the Jim Crow South', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **93** (2003), pp. 657–86; J. Winders, 'Imperfectly imperial: northern travel writers in the postbellum U.S. South, 1865–1880', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **95**, 2005, pp. 391–410.

[10] C.V. Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913*, 2nd edn (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[12] To be precise, Hoelscher is attentive to the way the performance of race 'went hand in hand with material changes taking place', though he is not specifically concerned with questions of labour: Hoelscher, 'Making place', p. 671.

[13] A. Herod, *Labor geographies: workers and the landscapes of capitalism* (New York, Guilford, 2001); J. Peck, *Work place: the social regulation of labor markets* (New York, Guilford, 1996).

[14] Herod, *Labor geographies*, p. 256; D. Mitchell, *The lie of the land: migrant workers and the California landscape* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 7.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[16] *Ibid.*; N. Foley, *The white scourge: Mexicans, blacks, and poor whites in Texas cotton culture* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997); H. Bauder, 'Landscape and scale in media representations: the construction of offshore farm labour in Ontario, Canada', *Cultural geographies* **12** (2005), pp. 41–58.

[17] M. Waters, *Black identities: West Indian immigrant dreams and American realities* (New York, Russell Sage, 1999).

[18] D. Delaney, 'The space that race makes', *Professional geographer* **54** (2002), pp. 6–14.

[19] Kobayashi and Peake, 'Racism out of place', p. 395.

[20] See Winders, 'Imperfectly imperial' for an excellent discussion of this literature.

[21] D. Massey, *Space, place, and gender* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 88–89.

[22] Jackson and Penrose, 'Introduction', p. 6.

[23] K. Anderson, 'Constructing geographies: "race", place and the making of Sydney's Aboriginal Redfern', in P. Jackson and J. Penrose, eds, *Constructions of race, place and nation* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 81–99.

[24] E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's plantation frontier before the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[25] E. L. Ayers, *The promise of the New South: life after reconstruction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

[26] Ayers, *The promise;* Woodward, *Origins*.

[27] J. Cobb, *The selling of the south: the southern crusade for industrial development, 1936–1990*, 2nd Edn (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[28] Woodward, *Origins*, pp. 211–12; Hoelscher, 'Making place'.

[29] Ayers, *The promise*; Woodward, *Origins*.

[30] M. Walker, 'Shifting boundaries: race relations in the rural Jim Crow South', in R. Hurt, ed., *African American life in the rural South, 1900–1950* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2003), p. 85. See also Hoelscher, 'Making race'.

[31] G. Hale, *Making whiteness: the culture of segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York, Pantheon, 1998), p. 284.

[32] Walker, 'Shifting boundaries', p. 85.

[33] Hoelscher, 'Making place'.

[34] 1941 pamphlet quoted in Hoelscher, 'Making place', p. 659.

[35] D. Grantham, *The South in modern America* (New York, HarperPerennial, 1995), p. 156.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[37] M. Linder, 'Farm workers and the Fair Labor Standards Act: racial discrimination in the New Deal', *Texas law review*, **65** (1987), pp. 1335–93; M. Linder, *Migrant workers and minimum wages* (Boulder, Co, Westview, 1992).

[38] R. Gilmore, 'Fatal couplings of power and difference: notes on racism and geography', *Professional geographer* **54** (2002), p. 18.

[39] W. Browne, 'Benign public policies, malignant consequences, and the demise of African American agriculture', in Hurt, *African American life in the rural South*, pp. 129–51.

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[51] Bitting wrote a series of green-covered booklets for USSC known as 'the Little Green Library', which the company released as a public relations effort. The quote is from C. Bitting, *Sugar and the Everglades* (Clewiston, FL, United States Sugar Corporation, *c*. 1939), p. 8.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 29.

[53] C. Bitting, *The fruit of the cane* (Clewiston, FL, United States Sugar Corporation, 1940), p. 11.

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[55] From testimony provided by USSC workers in Manuel, *Sugar production in Florida*, p. 12 972.

[56] C. Bitting, *Florida sugar* (Clewiston, FL, United States Sugar Corporation, *c*. 1936), p. 2.

[57] Letter from C. Bitting to Senator Claude Pepper, 4 June 1937, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library.

[58] Grantham, *The South in modern America*.

[59] Winders, 'Imperfectly imperial'.

[60] Grantham, *The South in modern America*, pp. 165–66.

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[62] G. Burrows and R. Shlomowitz, 'The lag in mechanization of the sugarcane harvest: some comparative perspectives', *Agricultural history* **66** (1992), p. 63. See also Wright, *Old South, New South* for an extensive analysis of the southern labour market.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] For example, agriculture wage rates in 1941 in Iowa were $3.10 per day, $1.55 in Florida, $1.25 in Alabama, and $1.15 in Georgia: October 1941 USDA, Bureau of Employment Security, Farm Labor Report, 1941, R.G. 211, Entry 197, Box 1, *Records of WMC, Bureau of Placement, Rural Industries, 1940–1943* (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[65] Peck, *Work place*, p. 34.

[66] L. Kyriakoudes, '"Lookin' for better all the time": rural migration and urbanization in the South, 1900–1950', in Hurt, *African American life in the rural south,* pp. 10–26.

[67] C. Hahamovitch, *The fruits of their labor: Atlantic Coast farmworkers and the making of migrant poverty* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[68] L. Levine, 'Florida: report of visit on January 14 through January 26, 1942 to United States Employment Service Office', R.G. 183, Box 68, Bureau of Employment Security, Labor Market Survey Reports, Florida, Reports of Field Visits: Florida Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1942).

[69] Exhibit C, Florida Legal Services, 1941, p. 5.

[70] Levine, 'Florida: Report of visit'.

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[72] Goluboff, 'Won't you please help...?', p. 789.

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[74] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Summary of daily reports of farm placement activities' (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1942).

[75] *Ibid*.

[76] Quoted in H. Jones, *The dispossessed: America's underclasses from the Civil War to the present* (New York, Basic Books, 1992), pp. 185–86.

[77] The USES agricultural report of 20 January, 1943 reported that in Palm Beach, Hendry and Glades Counties, bean pickers were earning $12 per day versus $4 per day for cane cutters: WMC, USES, Weekly Agricultural Labor Report for Florida, 1/20/43, National Archives.

[78] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Summary of daily reports of farm placement activities, week ending December 4', R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1943 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1942).

[79] *Ibid*.

[80] *Ibid*.

[81] J. H. Shofner, 'The legacy of racial slavery: free enterprise and forced labor in Florida in the 1940s', *Journal of Southern history* **47** (1981), pp. 411–26.

[82] Wright, *Old South, new South*.

[83] C. Heinicke and W. Grove, 'Labor markets, regional diversity, and cotton harvest mechanization in the post-World War II United States', *Social science history* **29** (2005), p. 276.

[84] Burrows and Shlomowitz, 'The lag in the mechanization of the sugarcane harvest'.

[85] S. Baldwin, *Poverty and politics: the rise and decline of the farm Security Administration* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

[86] Shofner, 'The legacy of racial slavery'; Jones, *The dispossessed*.

[87] Goluboff, 'Won't you please help...?', p. 778.

[88] Cosely and Perkins [*sic*], quoted in "*ibid*.,", pp. 786 and 788.

[89] FBI report, quoted in Jones, *The dispossessed*, p. 181.

[90] Shofner, 'The legacy of racial slavery'.

[91] J. Tiedtke (USSC), *Transcripts of the Hearings of the State WFA and USDA Wage Boards, 1942–1946,* R.G. 224, Entry 10, Box 10, Florida Folder, Belle Glade, Labor, Nov. 16, 1942 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[92] USES, Research and Statistics Unit, Agricultural Labor Report by Counties and Crops as of May 13, 1942, R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1942 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1943); USES, Research and Statistics Unit, Agricultural Labor Report by Counties and Crops as of April 21, 1943, R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1943 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1943).

[93] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Weekly agricultural report', Florida Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, n.d.), p. 1.

[94] Levine, 'Florida: report of visit' (emphasis added).

[95] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Summary, farm labor report, Southeastern Florida Area, week ending 16 April' (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1943).

[96] Shofner, 'The legacy of racial slavery'.

[97] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Summary of daily reports of farm placement activities, week ending January 29', R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1943 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1943).

[98] Federal Writers Project, *Florida: a guide to the southernmost state* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 474.

[99] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), 'Summary of daily reports of farm placement activities, week ending February 13', R.G. 211, Entry 199, Box 21, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1943 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives, 1943).

[100] For example, a sugarcane cutters job announcement sent to Mississippi in 1941 read as follows: 'Job: Title: Cane Cutters (Colored): 'No "City" men wanted as they become pool-room habitues, brawlers, etc. Constituted authorities exercise strict supervision over colored population and company makes every effort to cooperate in eliminating undesirable characters': quoted from Florida State Employment Service, 'Cane cutter employment position announcement', R.G. 211, Box 5, Entry 28, Records of the War Manpower Commission, Florida, 1941 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[101] A. French (Field Supervisor, USES, West Palm Beach), letter to F. Hathaway (Dir., Florida State Employment Service), 6 Feb 1941, R.G. 211, Entry 198, Box 5, *Farm Labor Market Reports, 1941–1943*, Florida 1942 Folder (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[102] G. Hill (Special Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, War Food Administration), letter to J. Taylor (Deputy Administrator, War Food Administration), 17 May 1943 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[103] G. Hill (Special Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, War Food Administration), letter to C. Taeuber, Acting Chief, Div. of Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 11 May 1943 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[104] M. Fortas (Acting US Secretary of the Interior), letter to C. Davis, War Food Administrator, 24 June, 1943 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[105] French, 'Summary of daily reports, January 29', 1943. In her novel *Their eyes were watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston deflates this myth. Tea Cake warns Janie on their arrival in Belle Glade, 'Yuh can't live on de muck' thout yuh take uh bath very day. Do dat muck'll itch yuh lak ants' (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, [1937] 1978, p. 193).

[106] French, 'Weekly agricultural report', n.d., p. 1.

[107] Quoted in Jones, *The dispossessed*, p. 195.

[108] French, 'Weekly agricultural report', n.d., p. 2.

[109] French, 'Summary of daily reports, December 4', 1942.

[110] French, 'Weekly agricultural report', n.d., p. 2.

[111] Hahamovitch, *The fruits of their labor*.

[112] D. Grubbs, 'The story of Florida's migrant farm workers', *Florida historical quarterly* **40** (1961), pp. 103–22.

[113] Baldwin, *Poverty and politics*.

[114] *Ibid*.

[115] A. French, Farm Labor Report, Southeastern Florida Area, week ending April 16, 1943 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[116] Work Agreement (Jamaican Worker), OFA Form OL-601-W, 21 Apr 1943, R.G. 224, Entry 8, Box 11, *Records of the Office of Labor, Gen. Corr., 1945–1947*, Laborers, 18, Jamaica Folder, 1945 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[117] A. French, Farm Labor Report, Southeastern Florida Area, week ending April 2, 1943 (Washington, DC, US National Archives).

[118] Anon., *The West Indies (BWI) temporary alien labor program: 1943–1977*, a study prepared for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Immigration of the Committee on the Judiciary (Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office, 1978) , p. 10.

[119] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[120] Senator Spessard Holland's testimony, quoted in Anon, *The West Indies*, p. 13.

[121] Kramer, *The offshores*, p. 39.

[122] Delaney, 'The space that race makes', p. 6.

[123] Omi and Winant, *Racial formation*, pp. 81–83. The US state, the authors argue, is 'inherently racial', and institutions (education, immigration law, family law, and so on) work to 'organize racial identities.'